

Raising Awareness for Gulf Restoration

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It has been nearly a year since the BP oil disaster, and the Gulf of Mexico is still in slow recovery. But thanks to the diligence of the Gulf Restoration Network, working with the help of Tulane service-learning students and interns such as junior Stephanie Stefanski, the Gulf just may have a brighter future ahead.



Tulane students such as Stephanie Stefanski are interns with the Gulf Restoration Network, an environmental advocacy organization. She hopes to pursue a career in environmental politics. (Photo by Claire Barry)

All species in the Gulf region depend on the Gulf of Mexico for both economic and physical survival. The environmental advocacy group [Gulf Restoration Network](#) recognizes this, and works on everything from the oil spill's effects on the fishing industry to campaigns that fight the destruction of the wetlands. Volunteers work on the grassroots level to help gain the public support necessary to push politicians to make real change in the Gulf region.

Gulf Restoration Network's focus on environmental policy inspires Stefanski, who hopes to pursue a career in environmental politics. She began working with the network as a [service-learning](#) student through her "Conservation Biology" class in the Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology. After seeing that the organization was "very effective in raising awareness," she decided to intern there.

Currently, Stefanski participates in weekly meetings and helps with a campaign to create a citizen advisory council for the Gulf region. The campaign also asks that 80 percent of the money from the BP lawsuit would go back into Gulf communities.

Stefanski says that she has greatly benefited from her internship with the network, explaining that it is a "great way to learn how a grassroots organization functions." Even more inspiring, however, is that Stefanski has already witnessed the successes of her work firsthand. "It is possible to cause change," she says.

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